

Germany and California Announce Collaboration To Advance Stem Cell Research toward Cures

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San Francisco, Ca., September 17, 2009—The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), the state's stem cell agency, and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) announced today an agreement to collaborate on stem cell research.

The agreement was signed today at CIRM headquarters here by BMBF State Secretary Frieder Meyer-Krahmer and Alan Trounson, president of CIRM.

CIRM and the German ministry are laying the foundation for joint research projects to advance stem cell therapies for treatment of some of today's most debilitating diseases. Late last year, a group of Californian and German researchers met in San Francisco to discuss various areas of mutual interest. The exchanges at that meeting suggested that collaborative work in a number of areas could be particularly fruitful, including the study of immunology. With today's agreement, the initial avenue for collaboration is likely to be the CIRM Stem Cell Transplantation and Immunology request for applications, which will be posted in November.

"The field of immunology is enormously important to progressing cell-based therapies to the clinic, but it has equally vast challenges to overcome; these challenges will benefit greatly from broad collaborations pulling the best minds into unified teams," said CIRM's Trounson. "One of CIRM's primary goals is to accelerate the field of stem cell research as a whole, and in some instances we can do this more effectively through collaborations that involve the best scientific endeavors, regardless of geography."

The agreement will make it easier for researchers in California and Germany to obtain joint funding to broaden the potential pool of expertise that can be applied toward research in a specific area. It is expected that researchers in both jurisdictions will be invited to form teams that will apply jointly for funding through a process that builds upon routine CIRM and BMBF procedures. For those that are approved, CIRM will fund the California researchers and BMBF will fund the German researchers.

"The survival of many patients with severe diseases has been facilitated by the great progress in medical technology in organ transplantations as well as in specific replacement of cell, tissue and organ functions based on innovations of regenerative medicine. Increasing demand in this area is foreseeable. Intensive work is therefore required on further innovative development in regeneration" said Germany's State Secretary Meyer-Krahmer.

"California was the first state in the nation to support and fund stem cell research, and now we are expanding our commitment to finding therapies for chronic diseases with yet another international partnership," said Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. "There are brilliant minds all over the world, especially here in California, and with collaborations like this we can help ensure that potentially life-saving breakthroughs can come more quickly and more often."

The long-term objective of the collaborative research is to better understand the mechanisms of regenerative processes in order to develop improved therapies and to clarify the potential risks of using stem cells or their derivatives as therapy. Research in this area is of course only possible within the corresponding national legislation depending on the funding body and location where the research is carried out. In the future, these newly developed therapies will enable a more comprehensive biological replacement of organ function, in particular in areas where transplantation is currently not possible.

CIRM and BMBF are discussing other potential collaborative activities including workshops, symposia, exchange of researchers, and young scientist training opportunities.

Germany's science and industry sector takes a leading position internationally in regenerative medicine. The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the German Science Foundation (DFG) prepared the ground for this by investing 230 million Euros since 1990 in research in this field.

"Germany is a world leader in biomedical research," noted Robert Klein, chairman of the CIRM governing board. "Germany will now join five other nations—the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Spain and Japan—as a partner with California in accelerating critical stem cell research to relieve the suffering of patients and families throughout the world."

CIRM currently has similar agreements with the Cancer Stem Cell Consortium of Canada, the State of Victoria in Australia, the JST in Japan, the MICINN in Spain and the MRC in the United Kingdom.

About CIRM CIRM was established in 2005 with the passage of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Act. The statewide ballot measure, which provided \$3 billion in funding for stem cell research at California universities and research institutions, was overwhelmingly approved by voters, and called for the establishment of an entity to make grants and provide loans for stem cell research, research facilities, and other vital research opportunities. To date, the CIRM governing board has approved 307 research and facility grants totaling more than \$781 million, making CIRM the largest source of funding for human embryonic stem cell research in the world.

About BMBF BMBF has a strong focus on life-sciences. It is engaged in various challenging fields: molecular biology, health research, biotechnology, nutritional research and basic research for renewable resources. Of course, ethical and legal aspects also play an important role. All these areas are promoted by targeted project funding and strategically supported by institutionally funded research institutions. In 2008, over 400 million Euros have been available for life sciences, with special emphasis on bio-pharmaceutical research and bio-medical technology.

With a total volume of 10.2 billion Euros in 2009, BMBF's budget will again increase compared to 2008. These additional funds will focus on the following areas:

- research for an ageing society
- health and nutritional research
- strengthening R&D capacities in small and medium-sized enterprises by means of the "SME innovative" funding initiative
- climate and energy research
- strengthening international research cooperation

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